

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES
GENERAL MEETING
OCTOBER 13, 2015**

Place: Room 119, Town Hall

TIME: 8:00 P.M.

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS ATTENDING:
Cameron, Cunningham, Sini, Jr., Voigt

STAFF ATTENDING: Ginsberg, Keating
RECORDER: Syat
Channel 79

Chairman Cameron opened the meeting at 8 P.M. and read the first agenda item:

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Town Plan of Conservation & Development. (8pm- approximately 10:45pm).

Review of booklets/outline of Town Plan.

Overall guidance on Plan format and preparation.

Any other issues related to all previous discussion booklets, as noted in October 8, 2015 ten-page memo from Glenn Chalder.

Glenn Chalder reviewed his October 8, 2015 memorandum that includes recommendations about converting the very rough draft booklets into portions of the Plan of Conservation & Development. He noted the Board of Selectmen's Vision Statement, and a copy was given to the Commission by First Selectman Jayme Stevenson. Each rough draft will need substantial modifications to reflect the comments received at the previous meetings and the discussions held by the Commission. Mr. Chalder hopes to have the first rough draft available for discussion two weeks prior to the next meeting which would be in early December, 2015. Mr. Chalder explained that the booklets will need to be cut back in size and be made more efficient in order to ensure that the final draft document is not too long. He reminded the Commission about the various outreach which occurred during Plan preparation, including both public meetings and smaller meetings at the library, and an on-line survey which occurred during the process. He said that the Commission needs to decide whether to strengthen recommendations or make them less strong via the use of verbs and language.

The Commission discussed whether Coastal Resources and Natural Resources should be in one chapter or separate. The consensus was to keep them separate. It was agreed that the Plan should be printed double-sided. Discussion ensued regarding sidewalks and bus routes. Mrs. Cameron noted that there is a bus route that runs along Hoyt Street and Camp Avenue. Mr. Chalder said he would confirm that information. There was some discussion about whether a separate chapter of the Plan of Conservation & Development should concentrate on the downtown business area. Mr. Chalder said that it might be possible to create a Village District in that area. Mrs. Cameron said that she feels that housing in the downtown area should be encouraged or, at least, considered.

There was also a discussion about the requirements for open space set asides and whether it might be appropriate for some form of payment in lieu of actual open space.

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As the Commission discussed the Noroton Heights area, it was agreed that the intent is not to maintain what is there, but to transform and update what is there. There was some support for the possibility of changing Heights Road to have development on each side of the street rather than the current conditions which has the train station on the south side of the street and development on the north side of the street. Mr. Chalder said that in order for that to happen, the Town and the State which are the owners of properties on the south side of Heights Road, need to work with the adjacent property owners. As the Noroton Heights business area is transformed, they will need new sidewalks to encourage safe pedestrian access through the area. Rather than using the Model Block sidewalk details that have been used in the downtown area, maybe a unique sidewalk design would be appropriate. Mr. Chalder also indicated that performance buffers rather than minimum dimensional requirement buffers might be appropriate provided the standards are specified in the Regulations.

There was some discussion about the Designed Commercial (DC) Zone which applies to both the Noroton Heights area and the Goodwives Shopping Center. One possibility would be to eliminate the DC Zone in favor of a more general business zone.

Mr. Chalder said that he had met with the School Superintendent a few months ago, and again earlier tonight. Mr. Sini suggested a number of capital projects that should be considered for the various schools in Town. Mr. Ginsberg said that Milone and MacBroom is currently looking at facilities for the Board of Education, and that capital costs will need to be considered in upcoming budgets. Mr. Sini said that the Town's educational needs should be referenced in the Town Plan of Conservation & Development, and the enrollments and projections need to be updated.

Mr. Chalder asked the Commission to consider whether the Town Plan of Conservation & Development should have one volume or if it should have a short volume which would summarize the goals and priorities and then have a second volume which would provide considerable backup information. Mrs. Cameron said that she prefers one volume. Mr. Chalder said that an implementation table is important so that things can get accomplished. That table would list the goals and priorities and then which group or groups or individuals would be responsible for implementation. He showed the Colchester Town Plan as an example.

At about 9:35 P.M., during the public comment portion of the meeting, JoAnn Hennessey noted that it would be important to consider implementing some of the strategies and goals expressed in the Route 1 Corridor Study of 2013. She also said that encouraging housing in Noroton Heights and downtown could increase the stress on facilities and infrastructure (drainage, sewers, traffic.) It could also mean more children in the school system and a greater amount of traffic in the downtown area.

With respect to open space, one comment from Reese Hutchison was that a payment in lieu of actual dedication of open space would be good, but the funds from the payments need to benefit the most number of people in the area. Mr. Chalder said that having payment in lieu of open space should be treated differently in residential subdivisions than it would be in the downtown or business areas.

Another comment from Mr. Hutchison indicated that the Plan should have generalized goals and statements and policies, but should avoid really detailed specific statements.

Attorney Bruce Hill said that he had submitted a letter with comments to the Commission. He suggested that the Town Plan of Conservation & Development should have some flexibility. He said

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that there needs to be some reformulation of the Zoning Regulations regarding the redevelopment of the Noroton Heights District. Attorney Hill said that the new buildings at 1020 Boston Post Road, Grove Street, the Darien Rowayton Bank are now becoming the character of the downtown area. He said that it seems that the character of Darien is good design, not a specific architectural style or feature. He said that it is important that the Commission create a similar, good character or improved character within the Noroton Heights District. Attorney Hill said that changing the Zoning Regulations and creating more non-conforming properties is problematic. He said that owners of small properties need to be considered before the Commission makes changes that would make those properties more non-complying.

It was noted that sometimes the use of terms like “maintaining the character of Darien” can sometimes be a code for “we are afraid of change.” Mr. Chalder said that it is an overall feel of the Town that evolves over time.

David Genovese said that if a program to receive fees in lieu of parking is adopted, it is important that the fees be used to implement traffic and safety improvements and additional parking rather than having the money just being held for some future uses that are unrelated to traffic and parking. He said that the Signage Regulations need to be updated for newer signs and that any changes made to the Regulations need to be examined to avoid unintended consequences. He said that people want to move out of their large houses, but want to have larger apartments or condominiums than are currently available. He said that 1,500 to 1,800 square foot residential units are becoming the standard that people expect. Mr. Genovese said that too many little, vest pocket parks are not good if they are not wanted and well utilized. He also said the traffic issues need to be addressed. It is not necessarily a question of density, it is an issue of design and management and quality of the buildings and of the traffic flow system.

First Selectman Jayme Stevenson said that she strongly disagrees with one of the statements made that indicates that the Commission should limit the population of Darien. She said that the Town needs thoughtful development and needs to be an open, welcoming community. She said that coastal resources, Long Island Sound, and water quality are important features of the community that do need to be protected. She talked about encouraging on-street parking adjacent to businesses and considering multi-level parking decks in some locations such as Goodwives Shopping Center and the Darien Ice Rink over to Fisherman’s Net. She added that in some cases, school policies affect usage. Susan Marks said that being general is better than being too specific.

Mr. Chalder said that he hopes to have the first rough draft available in mid-November so that there will be several weeks to review it prior to the December 1st meeting.

At about 10:20 p.m., Chairman Cameron read the following agenda item:

Discussion only regarding the following:

Proposed Amendment to the Darien Zoning Map (COZM #1-2015), Special Permit Application #246-C/Site Plan #251-C, Land Filling & Regrading Application #184-C/lot line adjustment, Sun Homes Darien, LLC, 36, 42 (formerly 0), and 48 Wakemore Street (Kensett II). Proposing to: establish the Designed Community Residential (DCR) overlay zone on parcels totaling approximately 2.49+/- acres; and raze the existing three structures on those properties and constructing ten new structures containing fourteen market rate units and three off-site below

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market-rate units at 269 Hoyt Street (two of which will be age-restricted); combine the three Wakemore Street parcels with Kensett I; and perform related site development activities. *HEARING CLOSED: SEPTEMBER 29, 2015. DECISION DEADLINE: DECEMBER 3, 2015.*

Since there were only four members present, the Commission will postpone the discussion regarding Kensett until the next available meeting.

Chairman Cameron then read the next agenda item:

Approval of Minutes

September 1, 2015 General Meeting/Public Hearing

The Commission decided to vote on these minutes at a future meeting.

September 15, 2015 Special Meeting--Public Hearing/General Meeting

The Commission decided to vote on these minutes at a future meeting.

September 22, 2015 Special Meeting--General Meeting

The minutes of September 22, 2015 were discussed. Several modifications and clarifications were made. The following motion was made: That the Commission approve the minutes as corrected. The motion was made by Mr. Sini, seconded by Mr. Voigt and unanimously approved.

September 29, 2015 Special Meeting--General Meeting/Public Hearing

The Commission decided to vote on these minutes at a future meeting

There being no further business, the following motion was made: That the meeting be adjourned. The motion was made by Mr. Voigt, seconded by Mr. Sini, and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

David J. Keating
Planning & Zoning Assistant Director

10.13.2015min